

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

The following Listing of Claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

### **Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): A stainless steel member passivation treatment method for forming a passive film on a surface of the stainless steel member, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an alkaline solution having a pH of 9 to 12, said alkaline solution comprising a pH buffer;

immersing the stainless steel member in-an the alkaline solution of pH 9 to 12 at 40 to 60°C, while air is being blown into the alkaline solution to form air bubbles;

~~air bubbling external air into the alkaline solution, added with a pH buffer, or provided with a pH buffer action, whereby that increase the amount of oxygen dissolved in the alkaline solution is increased to and thereby promote the formation of hydroxides constituting the passive film, and by carbon dioxides dissolving in the alkaline solution falling of its pH is suppressed, wherein the hydroxides constituting the passive film are produced from metal ions constituting the stainless steel and hydroxide ions in the alkaline solution, and wherein the pH buffer suppresses a reduction in the pH of the alkaline solution that would otherwise be caused by the dissolution of carbon dioxide into the alkaline solution by the air bubbles; and~~

after the immersing the stainless steel member step, thermally drying the member is then dried by being held at 100 to 200°C.

Claims 2 and 3 (canceled)

Claim 4 (currently amended): A stainless steel member passivation treatment method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the stainless steel member is a separator for use in a fuel cell.

Claims 5-9 (canceled)